
From: Dan Braccio <DanBraccio@ccgb.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 13, 2013 4:03 PM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Cc: Rep. Walker, Toni; Kane, Brittany; ayala@senatedems.ct.gov; Senator Harp; Rep. Clemons, Charles; Rep. Santiago, Ezequiel; Rep. Ayala, Christina
Subject: Maintain Full Funding for STRIVE
Importance: High

Dear CT Legislators:

On behalf of The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Appropriations Subcommittee for their hard work and for allowing me the opportunity to voice my opinion on such a critical budgetary decision that will affect thousands of Connecticut constituents and businesses. As a director for The Council of Churches' CO-OP Center program, I am strongly urging the Appropriations Subcommittee to fully fund the highly successful STRIVE (Support and Training Result In Valuable Employees) program.

The STRIVE program has provided a 400% return on investment for Connecticut taxpayers with over 300 graduates successfully placed into full-time employment in the past 5 years. They have an 80% placement record with a nearly 90% retention rate of graduates keeping their jobs after 30 days.

STRIVE, which currently operates in Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven, is not a traditional occupational skills training or academic enrichment classroom program. It is an intensive, experiential learning program that confronts and addresses individual behaviors that prohibit workplace success. The majority of the STRIVE participants are former offenders who have few options available to them for training and placement.

STRIVE recognizes that many people have never gained the foundational "soft skills" to succeed at the first jobs that lead to greater growth. The inability to work cooperatively, to handle criticism, or to successfully navigate the spoken and unspoken expectations in any workplace has often meant that people lose job after job without understanding why -- or how -- to change.

STRIVE delivers a personalized and practical introduction to the world of work. Serving any Connecticut resident who chooses to participate, regardless of skill level or incarceration history, STRIVE has demonstrated outstanding results compared to other employment and training programs while operating at a fraction of the cost.

With an extremely lean budget, and a proven track record of success, it seems unwise to cut a program that yields such high results. While I understand that many tough economic decisions need to be made, I believe it would be counterproductive to cut STRIVE's funding. Additionally, any cut to STRIVE may affect the federal awards that the program receives to provide complimentary services. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to fight to keep STRIVE in the CT state budget at its current funding level.

Thank you for your time and consideration of these remarks on behalf of retaining full funding for the three STRIVE programs. Please contact me with any questions or concerns you might have in this regard.

Sincerely,

D

Dan Braccio

Director/ Adult Services

The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, Inc.

1100 Boston Ave, Bldg. 5A, Bridgeport, CT 06610

203 367-8441 x 231

www.ccgb.org

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